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News Release

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Corps, Ocean Isle, sign agreement on beach project

OCEAN ISLE BEACH, North Carolina—Officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Town of Ocean Isle Beach signed a formal Project Cooperation Agreement today on a cost-shared endeavor to construct a shore-protection project here. The Corps will place 1.8 million cubic yards of sand, and protect more than 17,000 feet of beach with a combination of berm and berm with dune crown, reducing damages due to hurricane and storm action and beach erosion. The Corps expects to open bids for the work on January 16th, break ground some time in February, and see the initial construction completed by October. The project will be re-nourished on a three-year cycle over a 50-year period.

"We have remained dedicated to this project in the 11 years since Hurricane Hugo," said Betty S. Williamson, Mayor of Ocean Isle Beach. The powerful 1989 storm caused severe erosion to the dune system and damage to infrastructure and property, which would greatly impact economic conditions. "The next category two or three storm could result in millions of dollars of lost property. Twenty percent of our tax base would disappear. Along with the other five beach towns in Brunswick County, our narrow slice of beach provides between 43 and 57 percent of the County's tax revenues."

Williamson noted that at Kure Beach, in nearby New Hanover County, initial construction of a shore protection project cost less than the damage Hurricane Fran had caused the year before. "In recent storms, the only communities that have come through without significant damage have been Wrightsville Beach, Carolina Beach and Kure Beach, all Corps shore protection projects," she said.

The town will pay its share of the project from a Beach Erosion and Renourishment Fund established to support protection of the beach. The fund has been built up from local property tax revenues and from an accommodation tax paid by tourists who stay at the beach. The town pays 25 percent of the non-federal cost of the project. The state of North Carolina Department of Water resources will supply the remaining 75 percent of nonfederal funds.

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